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National Foreign Assessment Center

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Latin America Review

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3.5(c) Changes in the Army hierarchy represent a victory for the moderates and clear the way for the presidential succession.

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Argentina: Defeat of the Hardliners [redacted] 3.5(c)

Yearend changes in the Argentine Army hierarchy represent a stunning victory by the moderates--President Videla and Army commander Viola--over military hardliners and appear to clear the way for Viola to succeed Videla as President in March 1981. [redacted] 3.5(c)

The most important changes that took place as part of the annual retirement and promotion cycle are the elevation of Viola supporter Major General Galtieri to succeed Viola as Army commander, and the forced retirement of hardline Army Chief of Staff Major General Suarez-Mason. [redacted] 3.5(c)

New Army commander Galtieri [redacted] © * 3.5(c)

Suarez-Mason and Major General Menendez, who was sacked for leading a revolt against Viola in late September, were two of the government's principal hardline antagonists. A third, Major General Riveros, who is a representative to the Inter-American Defense Board, will also be forced into retirement. [redacted] 3.5(c)

Retired hardliners Riveros (1) and Suarez-Mason [redacted] © * 3.5(c)

*The above three photographs appeared in the weekly Confirmado, 15 November 1979.

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Viola's own impending retirement from the military necessitated a number of other changes that will bring Viola loyalists into the Army's top jobs. Between now and the time he assumes the presidency, Viola plans to seek international recognition--which he hopes will confer greater legitimacy upon his government--and also to lay the groundwork for the eventual return to civilian rule. Continued hardline opposition in the Army leadership would have threatened these plans and might even have prevented Viola's selection as Videla's successor. [redacted] 3.5(c)

[redacted] 3.5(c)

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